

Bad Days by Klancequeen2

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Summary:

El sometimes has bad days and Mike takes care of her when they happen.

Bad Days

Author's Note:

My life has been very stressful recently and this took way too long to edit. Sorry.

She was having a bad day.

They'd rode back like usual, her on the back of his bicycle while he steered (he'd recently taught her how to ride a bike and was probably overly proud when she rode to his house the week before to see him). She'd been quiet, which wasn't atypical or anything, but she seemed to shrink into herself more and more on the way home.

She hadn't had a bad day like this in a couple of months and it was highly unnerving for it to happen so out of the blue when she was perfectly fine during lunch a couple of hours before.

When the two got to the cabin (the cabin that was renovated the year before with the help of the party), she closed the front door, flinging her shoes and bookbag off to the side in a hurry, and walked straight to her room. She left her door wide open.

Mike took his shoes off by the door, lining them up against the wall and grabbing hers to do the same. He gently sets down his back on the kitchen table and does the same to Jane's things. Once she got back into the right mindset she'd feel terrible for treating her things so badly.

"El? Are you okay?" He stops in the doorway of her room, unwilling

to enter the room with her mental state unless she gives him some sort of signal to enter. If he were to walk in uninvited she may accidentally hurt him, then she'd feel guilty when she shouldn't and her mental health would be even worse.

She ‘nu-uh’s, lifting her hand to wave him over with her fingers.

His socked feet softly pad over to her and he sits down as slowly as he can to not startle her even slightly, even if she knew that he was coming. He made sure that both his hands were visible to her in case she became uneasy. He reaches out and runs his hand along her back, up and down, watching as she curls into herself.

“Is there anything you need?” He talks quietly, adjusting his tone so that his voice isn’t rough or too low. He doesn’t wanna bring up bad memories.

“Bath- feel... gross.”

“Okay, I can do that. I’ll take care of it, you just stay here.”

Mike stands up and hurries to the bathroom, opening the medicine cabinet and pulling out a small bottle of bubble bath. He turns to the bathtub and twists the knob almost to the end of the ‘hot’ side, tilting the half-full bottle into the stream of water. She likes warm showers, she told him one time. Whenever they put her in water before, it was always cold.

She doesn't take baths very often 'cause they make her feel like she's back in the lab, but if she asked for one he'd do it.

"EL, you can come in now."

Jane walks into the room quietly, so quietly that she's almost completely inaudible. There's a towel folded in half laying over the arms closely pressed to her body and he almost slaps his forehead out of frustration now that he realizes he forgot to grab her a towel.
"Thank you."

"Of course. Do you want me to close the door or leave it open?" Jane's always had a problem with enclosed spaces, and even though she's gotten better about it, the fear will sometimes flare up if she's in a difficult mindset.

She sets the towel on the counter. "Open," she whispers.

Mike nods and turns to leave, but a small hand encloses itself around the fabric of his shirt. "Stay please."

"I- El, I can't." He speaks softly. He doesn't want to upset her and speaking in a loud tone may make her feel unsafe. She doesn't need him raising his voice.

"Because I'll be naked?"

“Yeah,” Mike answers awkwardly, his head angled downward.

“That’s fine. Stay anyway.”

Mike snaps his head up and shakes it quickly. “El, that’s not a good idea,” he mumbles out. He forces himself not to back up. He *knows* that she doesn’t understand the issue with what she’s asked of him. She probably doesn’t fully understand what nudity means and what that usually suggests when two people are involved.

“Why not? I take a bath, you sit with me.”

He thinks it over. He obviously can’t get into the tub with her, and he can’t tell if that’s what she meant or not, but he can sit outside the tub. “Okay, I’ll stay in here with you, El, but I have to sit outside the tub and we have to have the curtains drawn.”

“Drawn?”

“Drawn means closed or pulled in this situation. Sorry, I should’ve made that clear..”

“Okay, we keep the curtains closed and you sit outside.”

He turns around but doesn’t leave and she begins to undress, loosely folding her clothes and setting them on the lid of the toilet in a stack. She steps into the tub and closes the curtain. “You can turn around.”

Mike stands still for a few seconds, unnecessarily worried that the curtain wasn't fully shut and that he'd see more than what was allowed. "Um, alright."

Mike turns around and forces himself not to look through the thin space between the wall and the curtain that was placed between him and his beautiful girlfriend. He walks over and sits on the floor with crossed legs. "So what did you learn in science today?"

"We're learning about- um, photosynthism?"

"Photosynthesis?"

"Yeah, sorry," she says.

"It's okay. It's a pretty big word." She hums happily and if he focused enough he could see the vague outline of her body through the shower curtain. She must be sitting up.

Mike takes a deep breath and closes his eyes for a moment, trying not to fall into such a train of thought. "Well, do you like learning about it?"

"Yeah, is' interesting."

“I think you’ll really like the astronomy unit.”

“Astronomy?”

“Astronomy is the study of stars and planets. You’d be learning about the sun and moon and stuff.” Mike scrunches his nose up at his awkward wording but knows she won’t mind.

“That sounds fun. I like pluto most.”

Mike chuckles and smiles, remembering when Dustin and Lucas had had a huge argument about the best planet in their solar system. El hadn’t known the names of them or what they looked like, so Will pulled out an old textbook of his for her to look at and Mike had spent an hour teaching her about planets. “Me too.”

“Mike, why can’t we take a bath together?”

Mike almost sighs but doesn’t want her to take it the wrong way and assume he’s mad at her, so he stays quiet. “It’s not appropriate. Our parents would be really mad.”

Anything sexual aside, he would honestly love to shower with her. He knows that he’d love the intimacy of it. El’s always been kinda scared of the shower, but he thinks that if he was there with her, she wouldn’t be as uneasy. And with her getting older and going to public school, (a high school, nonetheless) she’s been becoming more insecure about her looks lately. Which he *hates*, but doesn’t know how to fix. He’s pretty sure that a classmate has been calling her

names or something, but he can't prove it and doesn't think she'd tell him if he asked anyway. She likes to fight her own battles.

And he apparently likes strong women.

"I don't understand."

He doesn't understand much either. "They don't want us doing something that could," create a human "alter our lives."

Mike pauses for a second and realizes that she probably doesn't get it. "They don't want us doing something that we can't undo. They think we're too young." Mike thinks they're too young as well, but he doesn't think that that should be a choice his parents get to make. They don't get to decide when and what he's ready for. Plus, it's not like they've made the best life decisions. Not that he'll tell either of them anything significant about his relationship anyway. They've ruined almost everything else and he is *not* letting them ruin this.

"But we're gonna be together forever, right?"

Mike stares blankly at the folds of the curtain in front of him. "Of course, El. Forever and always."

"Then why-"

"What the hell are you doing?" Hopper's rough, angry voice suddenly

echoes throughout the room.

Mike jolts and quickly uncrosses his legs so he can stand up.

“Get out.” Hopper grabs Mike by the arm and pulls him out of the bathroom, slamming the door shut behind him.

“Hop she-”

“Shut it, Kid! I let you come here and you do what?”

“She’s having-”

“You take advantage of my daughter!”

Mike yanks his wrist from Hoppers’ grip and throws both hands into the air in frustration. “She’s having one of her bad days!”

Hopper watches as Mike quickly twists the bathroom doorknob and shoves his way inside the room. The curtains are partially pulled open, soapy water flooding the floor, and Jane must have slipped because she’s clutching her ankle with a shaking hand as she rocks herself back and forth on the ground, her knees pulled up to cover her chest. “I- I tried to- the door-” Mike takes the folded towel off the counter, shakes it out, and leans down to wrap her in it, completely disregarding her nudity, not paying attention to it at all.

"It's okay, Hop didn't know. You're alright. We're alright." Mike holds the towel closed as well as he can and sits on the floor with her, not caring about his nice pants soaking in soapy bathwater.

Jane clutches onto his arm and hisses quietly. Mike moves to crouch by her side instead of in front of her. He takes her hand off of his bicep and softly instructs her to hold onto the towel instead. "Let me see."

Jane lets go of her ankle and lets Mike lift it to inspect. "I don't think it's sprained, but it'll definitely bruise. Are you gonna need help walking?" Hop finds it kind of funny that he asks her such questions and treats her so gently as if he hasn't seen her throw cars with her mind. Not that she doesn't deserve the treatment- she does- but it's still odd in a way, that someone so powerful can be so vulnerable. "Hop, can you grab an ice pack?"

Hopper knows that he usually terrifies the kid, but whenever she's involved, he magically becomes fearless of anything and everything. Except maybe losing her.

Hop hums and leaves the room.

When Hop gets back with a small gel pack wrapped in paper towels, neither of them are in the bathroom.

"Sorry, didn't mean to fall," his daughter whispers.

"I know, El. Nothin' to be sorry for. I'm sorry I let the door close." The door was wide open, of course. Jane's ankle was propped up on a pillow at the end of her bed. Mike's laid on the bed under her on his back. Her body was draped across his with her ankle off to the side to elevate it, her foot resting atop a folded pillow. Mike's fingers ran over the back of her neck lightly as the two spoke in whispers to each other. The towel was properly wrapped around her now, a corner tucked into the top so it doesn't come undone.

Hop knows that he would've never been so respectful and innocent around a mostly naked girl when he was Mike's age. It's like he has tunnel vision when it comes to her.

He wants to tell Mike to leave the room so that Jane could get dressed, but he knows that she wouldn't be able to easily get dressed without help anyway, and making Mike leave may make her panic. Mike won't try anything.

Hop pads into the room softly. "You okay, hun," he asks as he sets the pouch down on Jane's ankle. She startles and inhales sharply from pain, turning her head to look at him before settling back down onto Mike's chest.

"M okay."

Hop reluctantly turns to leave but stops as Mike speaks up. "Could you hand me that book before you go?"

The novel Peter Pan sits on the dresser, the tip of a laminated bookmark sticking out of the top. Hop picks up the book and hands it to Mike. Jane closes her eyes and Mike mouths ‘thanks’ to Hopper before he starts to read to her, a routine they’ve recently picked up.

“If you shut your eyes and are a lucky one, you may see at times a shapeless pool of lovely pale colours-” Hop watches them for just a moment from the corner of his eye for just a moment. Mike’s arm is propped up on Jane’s back, her nose shoved into the crease of his throat. Her eyes are shut, her body calm and relaxed. He spoke softly and sweetly into her hair.

Maybe there was one person he could trust with his daughter beside himself.

Maybe.